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Southwestern Studies

MIMBRES MYTHOLOGY

by

PAT CARR


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PLATE 1

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SOUTHWESTERN STUDIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PAT CARR was born in Grass Creek, Wyoming, has a B.A. and M.A. from Rice, a Ph.D. from Tulane. She lived for three years in Cali, Colombia, and it was there that she became interested in archeology. She has had articles and short stories in *The Southern Review*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Yale Review*, and her work has been cited or published in *The Best American Short Stories* five times. She has also published a novel, *The Grass Creek Chronicle* (1976), a critical book, *Bernard Shaw* (1976), a short story collection, *The Women in the Mirror* (1977) which won the Iowa School of Letters Short Fiction Award, and she has received a South and West Short Fiction Award (1969), a Library of Congress Marc IV Award (1970), an NEH (1973), and the Texas Institute of Letters Short Story Award (1978). She teaches creative writing and literature at The University of Texas at El Paso and is finishing a new collection of short stories to be titled *El Paso Idylls*.

MIMBRES MYTHOLOGY

by

PAT CARR

★ IN THE LATE 1800s, a few proto-archeologists wandered through the Southwest, observing that the place was full of ruins, noting that some rather interesting pottery was turning up from areas few had ever heard of before. One such area was the tiny Mimbres Valley in New Mexico, inhabited until some time into the twelfth century A.D. by a group known as the Mimbreños. The valley, just outside present-day Silver City, was small, and the time span of the Mimbreños was short, but the quantity and quality of their pottery was both prodigious and unique.

This Mimbres pottery was produced in the valley from about 1050 A.D. until perhaps 1200 A.D. and was used as the standard grave goods in virtually every Mimbreño burial. It was a thin gray ware most often fashioned into hemispherical bowls whose interior was slipped with a fine white kaolin clay and then painted with a flat black iron ore paint. The resulting black-on-white designs, either geometric schemes or life-form images, were some of the most spectacular ever conceived for pottery. The geometric bowls were unsurpassed in their artistry and precision—one bowl had twenty-seven hair-line concentric circles in a border less than two inches wide—but even more fascinating than the elegant geometric designs were the cartoon-like, and yet somehow very natural, human and animal figures in the center of hundreds of picture bowls. These little figures showed animals of great variety, as well as men and women engaged in hunting, dancing, birthing babies, and occasionally making love, and *en masse* produced a pottery record of Mimbreño daily life that was almost photographic.

The value of such realistic and lifelike scenes for archeological study was recognized with the appearance of J. Walter Fewkes' 1914 study of Mimbres pottery, but occasionally some strange unrealistic designs appeared on bowls—men figures with reptile bodies and hoofed deer feet, or birds with fish tails and four spidery legs—whose interpretation and application was not so clear-cut. Such extravagant composite

figures had already been found in the more advanced pre-Columbian cultures of Mexico and Central America, but nothing like them had been seen in North America, and the archeologists of the Mimbres Valley were at a loss to account for them. When systematic excavation of the Mimbres area began in the 1920s and more pottery became available, some observers surmised that the composite figures probably had symbolic significance for the artists who drew them, but again they avoided any further interpretation. Fewkes realized this mythological intent as early as 1924 and wrote:

> These composite pictures illustrate to the Indian mind their folk-lore or mythology and may represent mythological beings or legends now forgotten which were current at the time they were made. It may be possible by renewed research to find survivals of these stories in the folktales of kindred peoples and thus determine what personages these composites were intended to represent; but at present we can do no more than recognize that the Mimbres Valley pottery bears evidence of a rich mythology or folk-lore that has disappeared.[1]

Paul Nesbitt in 1936 noted the same evidence, and he perceived that some of the other bowls as well, even those without composite figures, seemed to be dealing with very definite narratives. He did not elaborate on what the narratives might be, but he felt, for example, that the bowl illustrated in Plate 1, showing a man, a woman, and some parrots, had something to do with a love story. Since his study of the ancient Mimbreños was dealing with facts rather than feelings, however, he merely suggested that perhaps half a dozen bowls he found in his Mimbres excavation might have something to do with stories.[2]

I think that both Fewkes and Nesbitt were correct in their initial impression and that some of the Mimbres bowls do indeed depict stories. Some of the bowls of course merely picture the everyday Mimbres life and the everyday animals of the Mimbres region, but I believe that many of the scenes on the bowls are depictions of myths, the very myths the Mimbreños lived by and for. From a study of the myths of any culture, we are able to understand the ethical precepts, the inspirations, and the beliefs of that culture, and thus if we can discover the myths current in the Mimbres Valley during the eleventh century, we may be able to understand the ideals, the philosophical bent, and ultimately the very patterns of behavior of the ancient Mimbreño Indians.

The Mimbres potters would be far from the first to do this sort of pictorial myth-recounting. The ancient Greek potters centuries earlier had painted scenes from their own very rich mythology on bowls and

PLATE 2

PLATE 3

kylikes. They drew, with very sophisticated cartoon-like line figures, the stories that were the basis of their beliefs. We recognize the various characters and scenes and can recall the entire Greek myths only because we have the written literature that is reproduced in the pottery illustrations. While we have no such written literature from the Mimbres Valley, I still believe we can discern the myths behind the similarly motivated illustrations on the Mimbres bowls if we examine these Mimbres scenes with a literary eye and then find "in the folktales of kindred peoples," the survival of those myths that were known in the Mimbres Valley.

Such is the purpose of this work.

The task itself is not as formidable as it sounds on first utterance, however, in view of the fact that those "kindred peoples" of the eleventh century Mimbreños were the more modern Pueblo Indians of the nineteenth century who were still living in the Southwest, relatively untouched by the white man's culture, and who were still telling the same folktales and myths they had told for centuries.

All of the early commentators in the Southwest remarked upon the static way of life, the solidification of thought among the Southwestern Indians, and Cosmos Mindeleff in 1894 observed that "the oldest remains of pueblo architecture known are but little different from recent examples."[3] Frank Hamilton Cushing, who lived with the Zuñi Indians from 1879-1882, had earlier noted that same unchanging quality of the life in the Southwest and had come to believe that the white man had made no impression whatsoever on the Pueblo Indians. After an extended examination of the relations between the Zuñi and the Spanish, Cushing insisted that the horse, the sheep, the new Spanish foods, Christianity, and the tools of the civilized white man had made the same dent—none at all—on the Indians. He said,

> They use their hoes—the heaviest they can get—as if weighted, like the wooden and bone hoes of antiquity, vertically, not horizontally. They use their hatchets or axes and knives more for hacking and scraping and chipping than for chopping, hewing, and whittling....Finally, their garments of calico and muslin are new only in material. They are cut after the old fashion of the ancestral buckskin breeches and shirts, poncho coats of feathers and fur or fiber, and down or cotton breech clouts, while in the silver rings and bracelets of today, not only the shapes but even the half-natural markings of the original shell rings and bracelets survive, and the silver buttons and bosses but perpetuate and multiply those once made of copper as well as of shell and white bone.[4]

He reported that all new things—including the white man—were unheard of in the Zuñi tribal lore, rituals and myths, and he concluded

that "the Zuñi is almost as strictly archaic as in the days ere his land was discovered."[5]

That the ancient Indians did have objects and practices similar, or in some instances identical, to those of modern Pueblo Indians is readily observable from the hard cold evidence of existing artifacts and ruins, and this recognition of the stability of the past and the present and the unchanged, unchanging continuum of the Southwest has been the hypothesis for most of the ethnological and archeological work in the region. Few researchers would disagree with A.V. Kidder's conclusion that "inferences as to the meaning of ancient objects must largely be based on the observation of the role similar objects play in the lives of less advanced peoples of today."[6]

In the face of such an unbroken pattern in the use of objects and in the activities of prehistorical and historical Indians, it should be fairly safe to assume a behavioral, philosophical, ethical, and literary pattern equally static and single-minded. As Ruth Benedict pointed out in her work with Indian mythology early in this century, the tales she was collecting did not reflect the customs or the beliefs of the contemporary narrators but reflected the customs and traditions of many generations past.[7] For example, while the Pueblo narrator of the myth might have been a Christian, no Christian elements were in his story, and the heroes were all hunters even though the more modern Indians were all sheepherders. The characters used the Stone Age knives of flint and Stone Age implements of wood and bone from pre-Christian days. The food, the clothing, the gambling games, and the architecture of the adobe houses all reflected the prehistoric, pre-Columbian days, and the status symbols in the story were the ancient ones of shell, turquoise, and parrots.

The basic conservatism of the primitive culture thus perpetuated the ancient ways, and this conservatism perforce carried over to a preservation of the ancient literature. The traditions, ceremonies, and rituals that were an outgrowth, the *raison d'etre*, of the mythic literature also remained unchanged for centuries of static Pueblo life. And while I will not deal with the ceremonies or such ritualistic manifestations of the mythology as dance, perhaps Plates 2 and 3 can speak fairly clearly for themselves. Plate 2 is the design from a Mimbres bowl, carefully painted sometime between 1050 and 1150. Plate 3 is a sketch from the 1920 diary of the Hopi Indian, Crow-wing.[8] There can be little doubt that the two figures represent a similar dancer, and that over the intervening centuries, only the headdress has altered.

But even without these correspondences between the past and pres-

ent, I think that the clarity of the illustrations from the Mimbres bowls themselves will show that the basic myths have indeed remained unchanged. The Mimbreño illustrations evoke explicit scenes and characters from the centuries earlier Indian myths and could easily be used as illustrations for modern editions of those same myths. I think that the designs themselves will show that the stories current in Mimbres times differ little from the traditional ones recorded by Cushing or Benedict in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Mimbres storyteller-potters were not attempting to tell the entire story; they were instead selecting, as the Greek potters had selected two thousand years earlier, a significant scene from the story that would suggest the entire myth. Neither group of artists was the original myth-makers, but like Homer or Ovid, they depicted already existing myths and the portions of those myths that appealed to them. By such a process of selection and illustration, the Mimbres potters left us a graphic sample of a literature that had already solidified by the eleventh century.

The traditional myths from which the significant Mimbres bowl scenes were taken are found in tales of the Zuñi, Tusayan, Tewa, Hopi, and Navajo, with an occasional reference to the mythology found even further south,[9] for the Southwestern Indian myths are essentially the same, with identical characters (usually differing only in name), identical conflicts, and identical plot motifs. Most of the myths used herein, however, will be given in the Zuñi recording of them, for as Cushing believed and demonstrated, the Zuñi heritage was one that encompassed the entire Southwest, and the Zuñi people were the most characteristic and representative of all the Pueblo peoples while they remained the most archaic and the least affected by the white man.

The Creation and the Emergence

The first of these myths to be considered must, of course, be the creation story. In the Southwest, the Creation and the Emergence are linked as one myth and constitute for the Pueblo Indians a single beginning. It is a story almost identical for every group in the Southwest, but the creators themselves vary according to the version.

In the Zuñi version, the creation of all things is attributed to Awonawilona, the Maker and container of All, the All-father Father, who, existing alone in the void of dark space, conceived the waters, mists, and streams, and then thought them into being. He made himself into the Sun to give light to the spaces and the waters, and then created the Mother-Earth and the Father-Sky. These two, taking the

form of a man and a woman (since they were "transmutable at thought, manifesting themselves in any form at will")[10] gave birth to men.

In an alternate (here the Hopi) version, the world in the beginning was also one vast sea, but the creators of all things were two female deities, the two Hurung Whuti, goddesses of precious goods such as seashells, coral, and turquoise. These two female creators fashioned men and women from clay, taught them a song, and sent them out to populate the world. At the same time as the two Hurung Whuti were creating people, however, Spider Woman also made some men and women, taught them a different song, and sent them off into the world.[11]

Outside Southwestern mythology proper, but linked to it in a way that is only beginning to be fully explored,[12] is the Quiche-Mayan *Popul Vuh*, which tells a similar story. This version also begins with the silent emptiness of space into which once again is infused the need for men, and the *Popol Vuh* tells how the new beings were first made of mud, then of wood. Both of these early trial-men were flawed, however, the first of whom had no intelligence, and the second of whom was too wooden and had no heart. Then the gods fashioned a man from white and yellow corn meal, and at last he could learn the proper songs of adoration to go forth into the world.

But however men and women were created, or of what material, the Southwestern versions agree that they were created in the Underworld and that the world they were sent out to populate was well below the present world. This world now inhabited is the fourth plane of man's existence, three levels above the cave-womb world in which he was created, and all of the Southwestern groups agree that men had to emerge from the center of the earth into this fourth world. The Tusayan version says that in the beginning, "all men lived together in the lowest depths, in a region of darkness and moisture; their bodies were misshaped and horrible, and they suffered great misery, moaning and bewailing continually."[13] Part of this misery in the Underworld was due to the fact that the men and women created by Spider Woman caused dissension among the people created by the Hurung Whuti, and the result was general chaos. The Underworld was thus a place of moral and social disintegration as well as a physical morass, and the Zuñi version adds that "everywhere were unfinished creatures, crawling like reptiles one over another in filth and black darkness, crowding thickly together and treading each other, one spitting on another or doing other indecency, insomuch that loud became their murmurings and

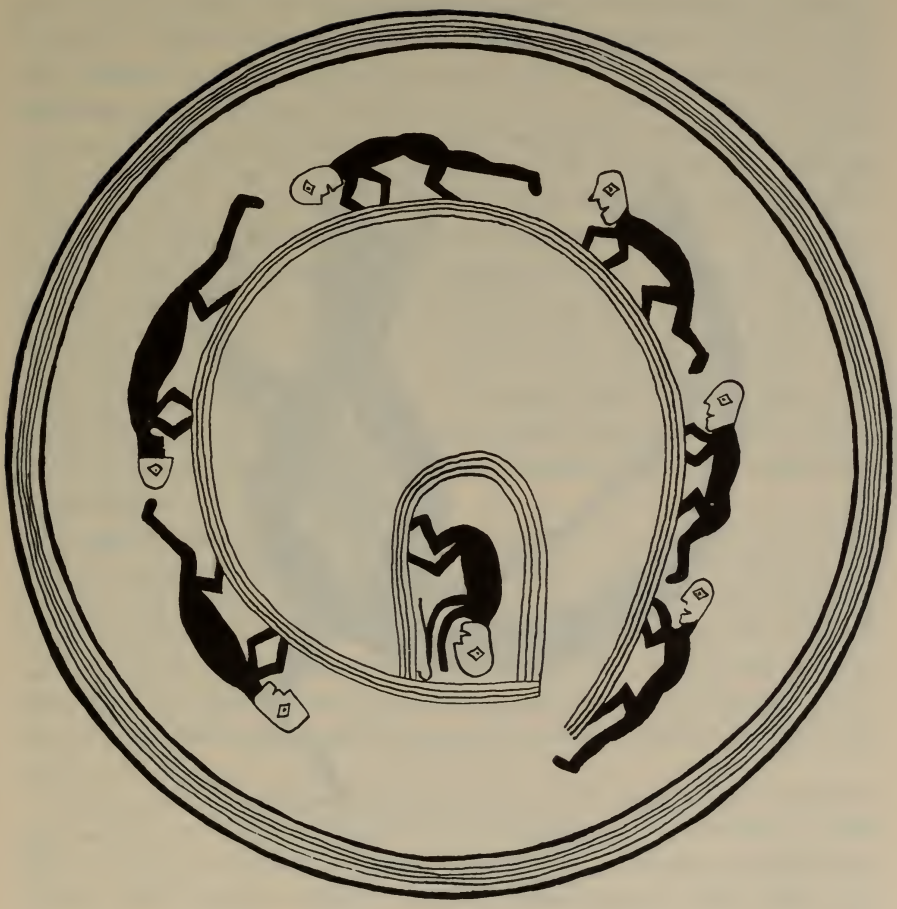

Plate 4

PLATE 5

lamentations, until many among them sought to escape, growing wiser and more manlike."[14]

Man's escape from the lowest depths thus becomes the Emergence part of the myth, the more important part of the story in Pueblo mythology. But at this point, the versions differ on just who decided men deserved to come out of the darkness. In some versions it was Baholikonga, the Plumed Serpent, who gave to the old men, the few who had at last grown wise, some magic seeds that would grow and let the people climb out of the Underworld on the branches of the magic plant. In others, it was Myu'ingwa ("a vague conception known as the god of the interior")[15] who intervened to bring man out of his misery. And in still other versions, the Sun himself took pity on mankind: "He saw that the world was covered with hills and springs but there were no people to give him prayersticks. He thought, 'My people shall come to the daylight world.' "[16] And so the Sun sent the Holy Twins, also called the War Twins or Ahaiyute, or an assortment of other names, into the lowest cave-womb to find the miserable people. The Holy Twins easily found the abject creatures in the Underworld and arranged for a magic ladder.

In some versions, these Holy Twins planted the pine, spruce, silver spruce, and the aspen, whose trunks the people might climb to come into the next world, and whose branches they could use for prayersticks to the Sun. But in other versions, the Holy Twins gave the wise old men cane that grew, poked a hole in the roof of the first world, and allowed the people to climb through the hollow cane center into the next world. Or they climbed the alternate leaves of the cane that grew like a ladder for them.

At any rate, all versions agree that the people ascended into the second world. In Cushing's rather verbose rendering, the Zuñi version tells at length of the climb: "Up this ladder, into the second cave-world, men and the beings crowded, following the Two Little but Mighty Ones. Yet many fell back and, lost in the darkness, peopled the under-world, whence they were delivered in after-time amid terrible earth shakings, becoming the monsters and fearfully strange beings of olden times."[17] (And perhaps here we have one source for the composite beings who appear on so many Mimbres myth bowls.) From the second cave-world, the people climbed into the third world, at each stop finding a brighter place that led them from night to twilight, to a dawning light. But still the worlds were not right for the people. As the Navaho myth says with charming brevity, "The first three worlds were neither good nor healthful. They moved all the time and made the peo-

ple dizzy."[18] At each level the people shed more and more of their repulsive characteristics, and at last they reached the fourth world.

The Mimbres bowl of Plate 4 illustrates the climbing from the other worlds and the moment of emergence. The figures are painted black, "the customary color in representing nude figures."[19] Since the figures in the bowl are also without decoration of any sort, the black of nudity also could suggest here the abject condition of the men in the first three worlds. For as Cushing reports the moment of emergence: "Men and the creatures were nearer alike then than now; black were our fathers the late born of creatures, like the caves from which they came forth."[20] In a sort of condensed evolutionary theory that might once more account for some of the Mimbres composite figures, such as that of Plate 5, Cushing's informant continues the story of the Emergence with the idea that men were cold-blooded like reptiles: "and scaly, their skins like those of mud-creatures; goggled their eyes like those of an owl; membranous their ears like those of cave-bats; webbed their feet like those of walkers in wet and soft places; and according as they were elder or younger, they had tails, longer or shorter."[21]

The central figure in the bowl of Plate 4 at the inner level has reached the *sipapu*, the exit hole in the middle of the earth from which mankind finally emerged. This figure, one of the wise, one of the"old men" who was first to become more manlike, holds the crooked prayerstick made from one of the sacred magic plants that the people used to climb to the surface. He waits at the opening for further instructions from the creators, who urged the people to follow the prayer forms and the sacred rituals.

When the people finally arrived at the tiny opening to the fourth world, however, the hole was too small for them, and we note that the figures on the bowl have not yet emerged. In some versions, the Badger dug the hole larger for the people to come out and was rewarded by being allowed to accompany men into this fourth world. In other versions, the Holy Twins pulled the people out of the *sipapu* one at a time. Either the Twins, or a mockingbird, sang while the people were being pulled out of the opening, and when the song was finished, no more people were allowed to emerge. The rest were forced to stay below the surface, and thus many more were left in the first three worlds than were allowed to come into the fourth world.

The fortunate people who did come from the *sipapu*, however, at last stood on the earth and were finally able to see the Sun. The light was too bright for them in all its strength, and they cried out with the pain as their eyes watered and their tears flowed. But as their tears hit

the earth, they blossomed immediately into sunflowers and buttercups, which thus became the Sun's flowers.

Kokopelli, the Humpbacked Flute Player

When men finally did emerge into the fourth world, they were accompanied by Badger and Locust, the latter of whom in his man-form was the Humpbacked Flute Player.[22] (All the animals were believed actually to have been men at one time and formerly had the ability to take off their animal coats and assume man-forms when necessary.)[23] Locust, an insect with the power of heat, played the flute, and with his music created warmth. In the hump on his back he carried seeds for plants and flowers. All humpbacked creatures, among whom were included the buffalo and the bear, were considered very powerful, but the Humpbacked Flute Player was even more powerful than the others because of his part in generation. He was most often depicted with a long penis to symbolize the seeds of human reproduction and it was a relatively simple metaphoric step to transform the flute itself into a phallic symbol.[24]

The myth bowl of Plate 6 shows the Humpbacked Flute Player with a crooked prayerstick, and an intriguing sunburst ornament on each side of his head. The two circles on sticks are perhaps a human adaptation of insect antennae, for here the Flute Player is in his human form. In more modern Pueblo symbolism, a motif of the Flute Clan uses the humpbacked locust, drawn with antennae (lines and circles) on top of his head, which is very similar to this Mimbres design.[25] The ornaments in Plate 6 can, of course, also be sun symbols associated with the one who brought the people into the sun.

The Mimbres bowl of Plate 7 presents another image of Kokopelli, in this case with the insect attributes represented and the hump with its array of seeds emphasized and stylized. Here the generative powers of the Humpbacked Flute Player are further symbolized with the water markings on the body itself. The triangle in later Pueblo symbolism represented wind and clouds while the zig-zag stairstep figures symbolized lightning. On the Mimbres illustration of the Flute Player these two combined symbols indicate rain, or life-giving power, as they do on the Horned Water Serpent in Plate 27.

The Flute Player in this bowl is also shown in duplicate, in a mirror image which was a favorite design device of the Mimbres potter-storytellers. In the North American Indian concept of nature, harmony usually came in pairs (even the earth needed the sky to complete it)[26]

and the need for pairing was a strong Pueblo impulse. The duality was not necessarily that of male and female, but was more often a plurality used for balance and stability. As one Pueblo medicine man explained, the old stories often had two brothers as characters, each with a different personality, but he added, "They are really all one person."[27] The Humpbacked Flute Player is thus doubled into an image of completion, equilibrium, and duplicated fecundity.

One final design element on this particular bowl that should be noted is the cross, one of the four quarters emblems omnipresent in Mimbres bowls. Here, the careful inclusion of a symbol (once more in duplicate) for the cardinal points becomes a very natural reference to the center of the universe, the *sipapu*, with which the Humpbacked Flute Player/Locust is so closely associated.

The myth of the Humpbacked Flute Player is involved not only with the early emergence of the people from the *sipapu*, but with the beginnings of their wandering over the continent as well. Led by the Locust playing his flute, the people began their journey over the earth and immediately came upon the Eagle, who insisted on testing them before he gave them permission to stay in his land. He told the Locust that he would poke an arrow into his eyes, and if he were brave enough not to close his eyes, the people could stay. The Eagle jabbed the arrow close to the Locust's eyes, but the latter did not blink. The Eagle admitted that the Locust had been brave, but as a second test, he said he would shoot an arrow throught the Locust's body. As the arrow pierced the Flute Player's side, the Locust merely raised his flute, played a melody, and the soothing vibrations from the music uplifted his spirit and healed the wound. The Eagle conceded that they were indeed a brave people and could stay in his land. He was much impressed with them, and since he was master of air and conqueror of height, he gave the people eagle feathers to use on prayersticks, and volunteered to deliver messages for them when they wanted to talk to the Sun.[28]

In another version, it was four monsters, rather than the Eagle, who challenged the Locust. The basic plot elements remained the same in the two versions, and the water monsters also tested the Locust by shooting him with an arrow. The arrow pierced his chest, but since he had magic powers, the wound healed immediately and the only harm was that the arrow left a hole in the thorax, a hole that locusts carry to this day. In this version, the Locust then had the option to shoot at the water monsters in return. When he pierced them with the arrows, however, each of the monsters was killed, and the people achieved the earth.[29]

Plate 6

PLATE 7

In a very recently excavated bowl in the Mimbres area (unfortunately already sold into a private collection and not available for reproduction), the climax of this second version of the myth is depicted. In the scene of the bowl, the Humpbacked Flute Player, still holding his crooked prayerstick but without any of the other attributes except the very decided hump on his back, is dancing below a vanquished sea monster, depicted as a huge plaid fish with the single horn of sea serpents on his forehead. The great sea beast lies draped in a tired curve over a carrying basket much too small for him, as a man sits beside the dancing Flute Player. The man has a very obvious straight back in contrast to the Flute Player's hump. Both figures are painted the black of nudity and have no decoration, as if they had just emerged from the third world.

In both versions of the myth, the Humpbacked Flute Player gains the world for mankind, and both have happy endings. Thus, on the bowl pictured in Plate 6 we have the ancient leader with his hump of precious seeds, his modified antennae, and his prayerstick from the Eagle. He smiles happily at his, and man's, accomplishment while he calls attention to his generous phallus, along with his hump, that other single most important attribute of his character.

This association with sexuality is undoubtedly in large measure responsible for his popularity, for the Humpbacked Flute Player is probably the best-known Indian image from prehistoric times. Petroglyphs and pictographs of him are found on rocks or in caves all the way from the tip of South America to Canada,[30] and these ubiquitous illustrations have led to a current theory that the famous Kokopelli may have been the archetypal *puchteca*, the traveling merchant trader sent out from MesoAmerica to traverse the continent.[31] These salesmen-ambassadors from the advanced civilizations of Central America always traveled with a pack on their backs and a staff in their hands, and it would have been an easy symbolic transition to alter the pack of seeds and the trappings of culture into a hump with the same import. Whether or not this conventionalization of merchant into humpback was actually the case, the Humpbacked Flute Player was nonetheless extremely popular with all of the Pueblo groups and the people such as the Navajos and Apaches, who were influenced by the Pueblos.[32] (Note Plate 8, a Hohokam flat dish with the unmistakable Humpbacked Flute Player figure repeated four times.)

Besides appearing on the most ancient and primitive of carved petroglyphs, the Humpbacked Flute Player has "turned up on pottery effigy vessels, in pottery designs, on stone statuettes, and in the kiva

mural art of the Pueblos. The Flute Player is usually shown playing this instrument and in some kind of erotic pose. Sometimes he is playing his flute for animals, sometimes for a girl or girls, and occasionally he is portrayed making love."[33] In many cases this sexuality becomes explicitly animalistic, and in one pictograph painted on a cave in Hueco State Park, Texas, the Flute Player's phallus is depicted in exactly the same way as a rattlesnake head painted on the same cave wall.[34] Perhaps these additional animal connotations account for the fact that the Flute Player is very often shown in a rabbit headdress. A myriad of cave or rock paintings show the humpbacked figure adorned with an ear-like headdress, or picture the human figures around the Flute Player wearing these ear-like headdresses. Over the vastness of centuries and two continents, the symbolism and mythic significance of the Humpbacked Flute Player no doubt varied, and while he was always allied with fertility and reproduction, in some cases he was also associated with hunting and tracking and rainfall.[35]

The Mimbres bowl in Plate 9 shows this aspect of the Flute Player. In the illustration, the figure has the rabbit ear headdress and the rabbit stick of the hunt, but the Locust-Emergence motif has disappeared. While the phallus is also missing in this depiction, the curved rabbit stick might well have taken over the symbolic role here. Archetypally, weapons and such male accoutrements as knives and spears are phallic, and in this particular Mimbres bowl, the concepts of sexual prowess (and thus reproduction) and hunting ability may have been equated. The additional mythic material and the very specific myth which might have been evoked among the Mimbreños by this particular image of Kokopelli must remain conjectural, but the presence of so many bowls depicting the Humpbacked Flute Player indicates that his was a popular myth in the Mimbres Valley.

The Wandering of the People

The point of emergence is an actual place in many of the Pueblo legends: in one, a brackish lake in the Great Sand Dunes of Colorado; in another, a cave near La Cueva, New Mexico;[36] or in others, simply "in the far north."[37] But after the Emergence, wherever it was, the majority of versions agree that the people were assembled, given final instructions on how to behave in the fourth world, and then divided into groups or clans that were to go their separate ways over the earth.

According to most of the legends, the Pueblo people were instructed to search for the Middle, that all important Center where they could live in unchanging stability.[38] The actual journeyings were no doubt

PLATE 8

PLATE 9

based on the historical facts of early Indian groups exploring, traveling and settling the length of two continents; but the Pueblo myths all agree that the people had to keep going until they had discovered the exact Middle of the world.

In their journey, sometimes the people were led by a star, which did not shine all the time and which thus forced them to stop and build pueblos, often staying for generations before they moved on. In other versions, the people were led by the huge footprints of Masau'u, the earth god, who will be discussed in detail in the following myth. Still other versions of the wandering tales had a parrot or a macaw or the Little War Twins as the leaders of the people. But in all versions, the journeys took generation upon generation, century upon century, and at each stopping point many were lost of the original group that had emerged from the *sipapu*.

In the Zuñi version of these travels, water was the destroyer in many cases. As the people reached a vast river, red as it surged past, they began the crossing. The river was swift and terrifying and the people could barely see their feet beneath the red rushing waters. Although most of the men were able to reach the opposite bank, Cushing's informant reported that "the poor women who, following closely with the little children on their backs. . . became witlessly crazed with these dread fear-feelings of the waters."[39] The children, feeling the terror of their mothers, were altered by it and began to change into aquatic creatures. "They turned cold, then colder; they grew scaly, fuller webbed and sharp clawed of hands and feet, longer of tail too, as if for swimming."[40] The mothers, terrified of the wriggling creatures their children had become, dropped them into the water and fled, shrieking wildly. Multitudes of the children thus fell into the swift river and were changed instantly into fish.

This same transformation into fish occurs in another version of the travels, this one recorded in the 1920s. In this Hopi version, the people lived in the far north where it was miserably cold. Half of the people decided to go south, and traveled until they found a beautiful valley where they settled happily and called themselves the summer people. At last the other half of the people, who had remained in the north, could no longer stand the intense cold and also decided to move south. But they lost the trail and went to the east, wandering until finally they, too, came to a river and a beautiful valley. It was the same river and the same valley of the summer people, but the new arrivals were on the opposite bank of the river, unable to get across to join their people.

After much deliberation, two medicine men decided to build a magic bridge with a parrot feather from the west and a magpie feather from the east. The two shamans placed one feather on each bank and formed an archway for the people to walk over. But an evil wizard on the west bank did not want to see the people united and happy, and as the people from the east bank were crossing over the magic bridge, he turned it over and the winter people fell into the river, changing immediately into fish. The legend ends on the note that the descendants of the summer people thus never eat fish, for fear that they may be eating their own people.[41]

Such a basic mythic event as these two versions describe—an event which turns some of the people into fish—might explain the depiction on the bowl in Plate 10. While this design may indeed be the realistic portrayal of men swimming among the fish in the Mimbres River (Harold S. Gladwin doubts, however, that the Mimbres River with its unusual drainage—it has no outlet to the sea and merely sinks into the sand as it leaves the Mimbres Valley—had any fish in it at all.),[42] the picture is also extremely similar to the climactic moment of the transformation myths. The design on the bowl of Plate 11 is also one of those puzzling composites that could well be explained as that instant of the children or the winter people changing into fish.

These particular myths might also account for the myriad of fish decorating Mimbres bowls. There are literally hundreds of fish designs such as that of Plate 12 in the bowls, and while, once more, the fish motif might merely be one of the omnipresent water symbols in a culture preoccupied with the problems of irrigation, these hundreds of fish might also be a commemoration of the "Lost Others," those lost to the people since the ancient times. A reference to the transformation myths might also explain the four feet on the Mimbres realistic fish. The Mimbres potters exhibit an unusually keen sense of observation, and the details of their illustrated mammals, birds, and insects are often quite exact. But the convention was obviously to picture fish with four feet, a convention that could well symbolize the once-human wanderers lost to the river.

Yet this turning into fish was not necessarily an unhappy state of affairs in the ancient myths, since the changelings had thus joined the immortals. Cushing's elaborate translation concludes the story of the transformed children:

> Now, when the little ones sank, still sank, seeing naught, the lights of the spirit dancers began to break upon them, and. . . being received into the midst of the undying ancients, lo' these little ones thus made the way of dying and the path of the dead.... But the mothers, still crying,

PLATE 10

Plate 11

knew not this—knew not that their children had returned unharmed into the world whence even themselves had come and whither they too needs now must go.[43]

There was nothing the people could do about the children and were forced to move on. But finally their leaders stopped, the earth stopped rumbling (the rumbling had indicated that they had not found the exact Center), and the people were almost certain they had at last arrived. But they had to be absolutely sure so that no more children would be lost, and they called in the Water-Spider and the Rainbow. M. R. Harrington reports it according to his Zuñi informant in the late 1920s:

And the Water-Spider spread his legs to the north and to the south, to the west and to the east, and then he said to the priests and the chiefs, "Now indeed I have measured it. Here is the center of the earth and here you must build your city!" But they said, "We have been hunting for the center of the earth a long time, and we wish to be sure." So they asked Rainbow to measure it also. So the Rainbow stretched his bright arch to the north and to the south, to the west and to the east, measuring the distance. Then he too gave his decision: "Here at this place is the heart of the earth."[44]

Since this is a fairly uniform myth throughout the Pueblo groups, apparently every wandering group assumed that it had found the Middle, that their own Pueblo complex was the true Center. Thus the delicately lined borders of the Mimbres realistic and myth bowls might be briefly considered in this light. These rainbow-like borders of the bowls might well be the curving measure of Rainbow that limited the bounds of their physical as well as symbolic Center, the heart of their particular Pueblo world in the Mimbres Valley.

Masau'u, or Skeleton Man

When the people began their extensive wanderings, one of the first immortals they encountered in this fourth world was Masau'u, or Skeleton Man. In yet another version of the Emergence Myth, it was Masau'u who intervened with the other deities of the surface to let mankind come forth from the darkness.[45] According to A. M. Stephen's Hopi informant, in fact, at "the si'papu he bestrode the orifice, and as the people appeared he took each person's right arm under his left arm and welcomed them to the surface. Wherever is man or woman, there also is Masau'wu."[46]

But in order to live on the surface of the fourth plane, the people had to be willing to die, and thus Masau'u became the god of death. His first contact with the people was a test.

One time the old men were assembled and Masauwu came among them looking like a horrible skeleton, and his bones rattling dreadfully. He menaced them with awful gestures, and lifted off his fleshless head and thrust it into their faces; but he could not frighten them. So he said, "I have lost my wager; all that I have is yours; ask for anything you want and I will give it to you."[47]

After the people had thus stood up bravely in the face of death, Masau'u became kindly disposed toward them, and in his benevolence he even tried to get rid of his more repulsive characteristics, such as his long tail that dragged in the sand when he walked. "This tail was offensive to children, they dreaded it and used to weep and fall into fits of terror at it, so Masau'wu cut off the tail, chopped it in little bits and flung them in the sea."[48] In Masau'u with his tail, we again have another possible explanation for some of the composite Mimbres figures that illustrate man images adorned with long worm-like tails.

But Masau'u remained a ghastly figure, and the myths describe him as a fearful creature larger than man, with feet about the length of an ordinary man's forearm (capable of making the huge footprints that the wanderers often followed), and his head covered with blood. As Stephen's informants kept assuring him in 1893, "Whenever the Hopi has seen him [Masau'u], he is always black."[49] The Mimbres bowls of Plates 13 and 14 show Masau'u with his skeletal ribs, his carefully delineated feet, and his black legs. In these depictions, and in the one on the bowl of Plate 15, parts of Masau'u are missing, as befitting a deity who can take off his head at will. The design in Plate 15 also shows Skeleton Man with his skeletal grin before he cut off his long and frightening tail.

The sight of Masau'u was terrifying; his touch was even more dreadful (he was often spoken of as "the one whose touch destroys"),[50] but since the relationship between death and life is an intimate and natural one, Masau'u was also a god of life. Even if in every myth version, he was not the instigator who brought the people forth from the Underworld (and in some versions he had to share that honor with the Holy Twins), he was at least the god of the fourth world who did allow the people to populate his land. The blood on his head was often associated with rabbit's blood, which thus allied him to prowess in the hunt and allowed him to bring meat to the people. He was also able to bring forth seeds and in this capacity played a fertility role similar to that of the Humpbacked Flute Player.

The bowl of Plate 16 depicts Masau'u with his death's head and stylized bones but also surrounded by symbols of fecundity. The border

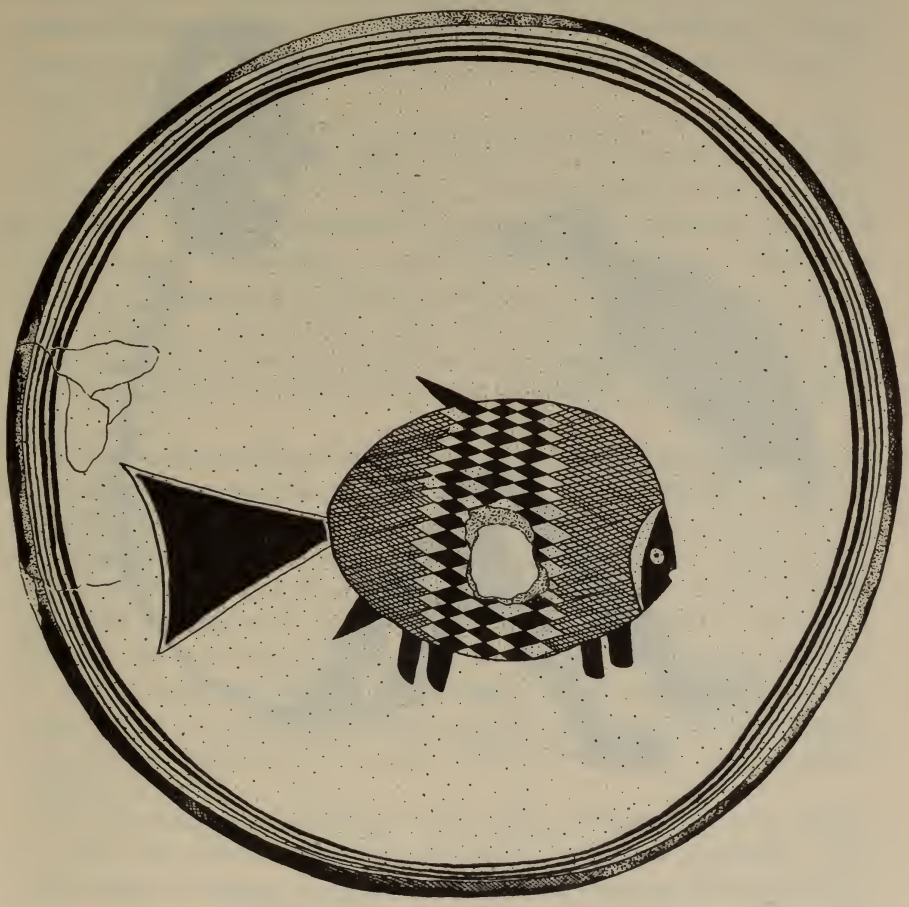

PLATE 12

PLATE 13

presents the duplicated stylized scroll figure and the triangular zig-zags of rain symbolism so vital to fertility.[51] Even more significant, however, are the bowl design features directly above and below the central Masau'u figure: a combination of rectangles and dots that has been interpreted as a Mimbres corn symbol,[52] that absolute necessity of Pueblo life.

It is in this capacity as fertility god that Masau'u is also associated with fire, and the central figure in Plate 13 is accompanied by a stylized little animal we may interpret as being a badger—with a stylized fire drill in its mouth perhaps—for badgers are traditionally a part of fire-bringing. The badger is well known for his digging ability, an ability that allows him to find the roots used to make fires, and this in turn associates him with fire. The little animal's digging ability also gives him metaphorical possibilities of digging in graves and of thus raising the dead,[53] and thus allows him a close affiliation with Skeleton Man.

In most myths, Masau'u is seen abroad only at night, carries a torch, and is essentially bat-like and blind by day. This blindness may be implied by the pupilless eyes in the Mimbres illustration of Plate 13, for the Mimbres potters conventionally drew human faces in profile with the eyes full-face, and invariably indicated pupils. But at any rate, the blindness was almost always accompanied by fire, which in turn made Masau'u the fire-bringer, the masculine fire god, since fire and sexuality were generally equated. These symbolic roles of fertility, phallic powers, and fire perhaps became merged, as Robert Graves suggests, "because the twirling of the male drill in the female stock suggested phallic magic."[54]

An interesting figure relating to this aspect of Masau'u is that of Plate 17. This bowl illustration does not have the skeletal elements of the other Masau'u designs, or portions of the body missing, but it does have the huge feet and an accentuated phallus for fertility that might relate it to Skeleton Man. There is also a symbol on the back that might well be a stylized fire image appropriate to the god who is often an American Indian analogue to the Greek Prometheus and who brought fire to Pueblo mankind. The bowl is one of the red-on-white versions of Mimbres ware that appeared in great abundance near the end of the Mimbreño occupation of the Mimbres Valley,[55] and this lateness may account for the variations between the figure on this bowl and the earlier figures on the black-on-white bowls—if this indeed is Masau'u.

One further bit of evidence that it might be Masau'u is the fact that Masau'u is also a Trickster figure in the myths. His first dealing with

the newly emerged people was a test that was essentially a prank, and as Stephen's Hopi informant reported: "Masau'u is a thief, a liar, and very jealous, also a persistent practical joker. He made trees grow gnarly and crooked and twisted men's faces into ridiculous shapes so that he could laugh at them. He not only played tricks upon men and inanimate things, but on the other gods also."[56] But the Trickster archetype must go down in defeat, and in every Pueblo myth, Masau'u gets his merited justice, as his tricks forever backfire.

And in Plate 17 the figure seems to have both the fertility association and the attributes that are almost universally linked to Trickster figures. These archetypal Tricksters are represented as constantly giving in to their baser appetites, such as greed or excessive sexuality, and then being caught by their own thoughtless self-indulgence. The Trickster in the elaborate Winnebago cycles is forever plagued by his hunger and an inordinately long penis which he is unable to control and which constantly works toward his detriment.[57] The bowl in Plate 17 may show Masau'u in that same light. He has the extraordinarily long penis of other American Indian Trickster figures, and here, in the myth bowl design, the hands reach vainly for the appendage that is beyond control. An elaborate sexual prank is the central dramatic image of the bowl, and thus it may well be Masau'u as Trickster that the storyteller-potter had in mind.

The Little War Twins

Perhaps the most important leaders of the people in their wanderings, and the demigods most usually credited with leading mankind out of the lower depths in the first place, are the Little War God Twins or Ahaiyute. Their father is the Sun, and their creation is an excellent example of the Pueblo need for duality. There is not one, but a pair of hero sons, and they are differentiated by being referred to as The Elder and The Younger. At the same time, they are nonetheless inseparable in the body of myths surrounding them, acting in almost every case as one, and as the old shaman explained, they are essentially the same. And even though Ahaiyute is actually the name of The Elder—with The Younger known as Matsailema—they are usually called Ahaiyute collectively.[58] (In the Tusayan myths, the older brother is Pekonghoya and the younger one is distinguished by the name Balingahoy, the Echo;[59] in the possibly related Nahuatl myths, the culture hero Quetzalcoatl was generally accompanied by his *nahual*, "a kind of double or alter ego.")[60]

In a very archetypal birth for the hero of any culture, the Twins had

Plate 14

Plate 15

a miraculous conception and creation, sometimes appearing from no mother at all: "The earth was covered with mist. He [the Sun] threw his rays into the mist and there in the world his sons stood up. They were two (boys). Their hair was tangled, they had long noses, long cheeks. Next day they played together."[61] In some myths they were born from the Moon or Yellow Woman,[62] who was impregnated by a sunbeam or by a drop of water splashing on her as she lay sleeping beside a waterfall, or by a ray of the sun coming through a mist and then allowing the conception of the two little demigods.

Their mother in any case was not important and faded out of the myths immediately, replaced by Spider Woman or Spider Grandmother, who was the guardian of the two Little War Twins. Their first important mission was to bring the people up to the fourth world, but they also had a great deal to do with the creation of this fourth world. They are credited with making mountains and rocks, and with creating canyons with their arrows, since the rainbow was their bow and the lightning was their arrow. They also made the trees and grass and told the people how to find water beneath the grass. And since they were the most significant heroes of the Pueblo peoples, most of the tales concerning them were adventures which have remained very similar from tribe to tribe. They went in search of their father the Sun, encountering many tests and trials before they could prove that they were indeed his sons; they stole lightning and thunder; they led the people from the Underworld; and in a long series of tales somewhat unrelated, they killed various kinds of monsters, brought men essential rituals and prayers, and earned the gratitude of mankind.

One of these adventures explains the Mimbres bowl of Plate 18, one of the most fascinating and most speculated about Mimbres bowls ever found. The myth itself is here recounted in the Tewa version recorded by Elsie Clews Parsons, a version which I think deserves quoting in its entirety.

Far away at Kunluokyut'e'e the Ewele [the Little War Twins] were living. They had no mother or father, only a grandmother.... The people at Kunluokyut'e'e had races every day with the round ball.... The people of the witch kiva always beat the people of the other kiva. The people thought that they would like to beat the witch kiva. They asked the kiva old man how they could beat the witches.—"I will try to see how we can beat them." He made four feather-strings and four prayer-sticks and he made two sticks and two balls and took them to the house of the Ewele. These Ewele were still playing stick-ball. Grandmother saw the old man grandfather and asked him to sit down by the fire. The Ewele never knew that anybody had come in. She hit them on the

head with a stick, so they stopped playing ball. So they sat down by the fireplace. "Did you want something?" said Grandmother. "Yes," said the kiva old man. "I came to ask these boys to help us in the races tomorrow."—"Did you bring anything for them?" asked grandmother. "Yes, here is the bundle for them." Grandmother opened it and found the feather-strings, the prayer-sticks, the sticks and balls. She divided the things.... She called to her grandchildren, "Come over here," said Grandmother to them. "This is for you and this for you," said Grandmother. "Tomorrow we are going to have a race. These witch kiva people we have never beaten, so I am to ask you to help beat them."—"We will come and help you beat them," said the Ewele.

So the kiva old man went back to his kiva.... "Those Ewelen were glad to get what I brought them and they said that they would help us," said the old man. Next morning another man went to each house and said they were going to race in the afternoon. They began to paint themselves. With white paint they made designs on their body. "Those who lose this race we will cut off their heads," said the leader of the race. He took out a big knife and an old man took it to the other side of the mesa. They started off in the race. The witches were way way ahead. The Ewelen were hidden somewhere with their ball. They kicked it on and overtook the witches. There was a line they always raced to. The Ewelen got there first. "Well, we will cut your head off," said the old man. "All right," said the witches, "we said so, we must do it." So they cut the heads off of all the witches. They used the knife of the Ewelen. The women had come down to this line, all but a witch woman who had a baby and did not go down. They cut off the heads of all the men and then of all the women. They thought they had killed all the witches, but there was one witch woman left, the woman with the baby. So there are still witches left.[63]

And here is one myth that can plausibly be used to explain Plate 18. This bowl has been the focus of excessive conjecture, and various explanations have been offered for it. The costume of the seated figure has often been interpreted as being the priestly garb used during a ceremony of sacrifice, and it is thus often assumed that the bowl depicts symbols borrowed by the Mimbreños from tribes of the south—considering the wide-spread use of the feathered serpent in such ceremonies in the Central American empires. And while there is a possibility that this interpretation is valid,[64] there is less evidence than is generally supposed that the kind of human sacrifice rampant in the Toltec and later Aztec cultures was widely practiced on the North American Continent. A few headless skeletons and a few heads without bodies have been found in the La Plata region of northern New Mexico,[65] but the examples to date are extremely rare. And while a few burials in the Mimbres Valley were found at the Swarts Ruin with only a skull and accompanying bowl interred, the current theory is that

Plate 16

Plate 17

such burials represent a disturbed grave and a subsequent reburial, rather than the practice of sacrifice and decapitation.[66] One researcher concludes that there probably was no human sacrifice in the Pueblo culture because the culture itself "is so short that any memory of such a practice would still linger among the whole tribe."[67] This kind of memory and tradition does not exist among the Pueblo tribes.

Thus, rather than a realistic scene of human sacrifice, I think that the bowl depicts the climactic scene of one of the Ahaiyute myths: the tale of the race with the witches and the triumph of the good kiva and the War Twins. Here we may have the old kiva man, in the costume of his kiva rather than in the garb of a feathered serpent priest,[68] cutting off the head of one of the defeated witches, whose face is painted "with white paint." The strange looking knife in the myth scene helps contribute to this interpretation as well, for the point is made in the tale that *they used the knife of the Ewelen.* This knife played a significant role in another myth in which the Ewelen, or Ahaiyute, had turquoise rabbit sticks that they used to cut each other in half as they played. Since they were gods, the dismembering was harmless and they sliced each other apart with great glee. But when they played with human children, the rabbit stick knife killed all the children and no one was able to put them back together or to give them life again.[69] That unusual knife, the knife of the Ewelen which resembles a rabbit stick, appears in the center of the bowl in Plate 18, and is being used to behead one of the evil witches.

Of course, another possible interpretation for this bowl is that both figures, the decapitated and the decapitator, might be illustrations of the Ahaiyute themselves, and we might have the mythic game of the Holy Twins as they happily cut each other apart. The knife in this case would be the same turquoise rabbit stick, and the costume could be the armour of the Twins such as that described by Cushing: "on their backs [they wore] targets of cotton close plaited with yucca... and on their heads wore they helmets of strength like to the thick neck-hide of male elks, whereof they were fashioned."[70] This interpretation would also explain the strange connecting tissue between the head and neck of the beheaded figure. There is no actual counterpart in man for this link between the dismembered parts, and it thus may be a symbol for the belief that life is not really disconnected and that the prone black figure, one of the immortal Little War Twins, whose face is still the white of life, will easily go back together.

This sacrifice of each other is one of the myths told of the two immortal brothers in the *Popol Vuh* (wherein they are called Hunahpú

and Xblanqué). In this version of the myth, the brothers used the ploy to defeat enemies, the Xibalba. The enemies watched them kill each other, "one by one his [Hunahpú's] arms and legs were sliced off; his head was cut from his body and carried away." The enemies then saw that the demigod returned to life and became whole again, and they demanded that the holy boys do the same trick for them in order to give them immortality. But when the heroes killed the evil chieftains, they did not come back to life, and the myth ends happily on the note that "in this way the Lords of Xibalba were overcome."[71]

Moreover, all of these various myths result in the same happy outcome. Any of these possible explanations of the Mimbres illustration becomes a climactic moment for the victorious Twins. One myth results in the defeat of evildoers, one depicts the fortunate immortality of the culture heroes, and one becomes the happy conclusion for the Pueblo people who have, almost, eliminated Pueblo witches.

The Little War Twins were rather natural favorites for Mimbres myth bowls, and they occur as the central figures in a myriad of myth designs. In another bowl, which belongs to a private collector and which I am unable to reproduce,[72] the central scene deals with another of the more entertaining Ahaiyute adventures. The bowl is one of those erotic Mimbres black-on-white bowls, of which there are many,[73] and shows a couple in the center of the design engaged in making love. Six little rudimentary figures stand close to the lined border with rabbit sticks, prayersticks, and what may be feather-strings or bows and arrows (favorite gift objects for the Ahaiyute). The central figures, as well as the six stylized watchers, are painted the black of nudity. The female stands with her foot on the chest of the male, whose penis is inside the vagina, and both the foot and the penis are carefully outlined in white. The penis is not the standard circle on a stem that was the usual way of drawing the phallus in Mimbres designs, but is shaped like a club of the hockey stick type. Around the vaginal opening is another white outline circled with distinct lines that resemble thorns or teeth. The male figure wears only a very elaborate feather headdress that is the focal point of the whole design, and the female wears a necklace.

The myth that I am convinced is illustrated by this design is one recorded by Ruth Benedict. The Holy War Twins were living with Spider Woman.

> Their grandmother said, "Nearby in the west there are eight girls living with their grandmother. Don't go there. They have teeth in their vaginas. They will cut you and you will die." "All right." In Tsukipa (Big Belly) the Lehaci lived. They were six young men and they lived

Plate 18

PLATE 19

with their grandfather. The Ahaiyute went there. They told the six boys to get oak wood and make themselves each a false penis. Then they told them to get hickory wood and each make themselves a second. When they finished Younger Brother went down west where these women lived. He said, "Do you girls want us to come and dance tonight?" "Yes, how many are there of you?" "There are eight of us and our grandfather." "That is just right. There are eight of us and our grandmother." "We shall come tonight." Younger Brother went back. He told them, "They want us to go dance late tonight." They went down.... They lay with the girls. The grandmother took the grandfather. All the men took out their false members. They used them cohabiting. They broke the teeth from the women's vaginas. The blood ran. When the oak members were worn out, they put them aside and took the hickory ones. By daylight the teeth of these women were all worn out. They were broken in pieces. The grandfather told the boys, "We shall beat the drum all the way home." No one of them was killed. They went back home to Tsukipa, and Ahaiyute went back to Corn Mountain.[74]

In the bowl are pictured seven of the eight characters recorded in the myth (minus the copulating grandparents), but if we remember that the Twins are often one, the six Lehaci and one Ahaiyute are quite sufficient for one bowl interior. The club-shaped penis is thus explained by the oak and hickory substitutes, and the elaborate feather headdress indicates the presence of Ahaiyute himself. The most dramatic moment of the myth, the one chosen by the myth-teller potter, is the triumph of the Ahaiyute and the Pueblo people in the person of the Lehaci. And in the myth, with this climactic moment, the Ahaiyute have destroyed for mankind a type of monster, the supernatural emasculating Circe/Dark Lady, the archetypal Vagina-with-Teeth.

Another myth that depicts the Twins destroying yet another type of monster is that of Plate 19. In this myth the Little War Twins defeated,to the joy and relief of mankind in the Southwest, the Cloud Swallower, an evil monster high in the mountains that swallowed every cloud passing by him. Since he was destroying the clouds, there was no rain, and a terrible drought resulted. In some versions this monster was also a cannibal giant who lived on a precipice and kicked his victims over the edge to his waiting children (always females) who devoured the vanquished heroes.[75] In other versions, the monster took the shape of a giant elk with a neck half of a mile long, whom the Twins defeated with the help of Gopher, who went to the monster and requested a bit of hair for his nest. Gopher shaved a circle of hair from over the Cloud Swallower's heart, and the Twins were able to shoot him directly in the heart and destroy him.[76] The myth bowl of Plate 19 illustrates this battle of the Little War Twins with the Cloud

Swallower monster, here in a composite figure with marks of lightning on his back. In this scene, the Younger Brother and the Elder (in still other myths known as Holy Boy and Holy Man) are differentiated by size. The scene shows the climactic moment as the Twins rescue the rain from the monster. In all versions of the myth, the Twins triumph, defeat the monster, and end the great drought.

That the Holy Twins were the main Pueblo culture heroes is well demonstrated by the profusion of myths in which they went on adventures and defeated the many monsters that plagued man in his early days on earth. But these Little War Twins were also children, semi-Trickster figures who were constantly getting into mischief and playing tricks from which their grandmother, Spider Woman, had to extricate them. They were constantly playing tricks on their old grandmother as well, and one of these elaborate jokes is depicted in Plate 20. This myth, here in an Acoma version recorded by C. F. Lummis, calls the Twins Maw-sahv and Oo-yah-wee. They killed a great She-Bear, although their grandmother had always forbidden them to go near the canyon where the bear had lived.

> Then the Twins took their thunder-knives and skinned her.
> They stuffed the great hide with grass, so that it looked like a Bear again, and tied a buckskin rope around its neck.
> "Now," said Maw-sahv, "We will give our grandma a trick!"
> So, taking hold of the rope, they ran toward Acoma, and the Bear came behind them as if leaping. Their grandmother was going for water; and from the top of the cliff she saw them running so in the valley, and the Bear jumping behind them. She ran to her house and painted one side of her face black with charcoal and the other side red with blood of an animal; and, taking a bag of ashes, ran down the cliff and out at the Bear, to make it leave the boys and come after her.
> But when she saw the trick, she reproved the boys for their rashness—but in her heart she was very proud of them.[77]

The illustration on this particular bowl has been seen as representing part of the Mimbres Valley life: a hunting scene in which two hunters have hit on the best way to bring home a dangerous animal. But while there are other Mimbres bowls carrying obvious bear figures (one in which a man is fighting a bear), in the excavation of Mimbres ruins such as the Swarts site, there were no bear bones found.[78] This lack would indicate that bears were not ordinarily big game animals in the Mimbres area, and would indicate some other reason why bears appear on the bowls and why such big game as bison (whose bones are found in the ruins) do not seem to be depicted. Thus, rather than a hunting scene, the design of Plate 20 I believe is instead this mythic scene from

PLATE 20

PLATE 21

the Ahaiyute adventure with the bear. The figures' varied sizes are once again like those of the pair battling the Cloud Swallower. Then, too, the Little War Twins were often depicted with stripes of war-paint,[79] and here we have the slashes of paint on the heroes' faces. The cloud/rain symbol on the side of the bear could simply represent power, but could as well show a merging of the tale with its variation, the same trick in which the Twins used the body of Atocle Woman, a she-bear type who controlled rain. The Twins defeated Atocle Woman, then dragged her body along as if she were chasing them, and Spider Woman dashed out of her house to beat off the evil sorceress while the Twins roared with laughter.[80] Or, the same tale is told with the trick using a dead deer from which their grandmother came to rescue them: "She hit that deer and she hit and hit till she was exhausted. The Ahaiyute laughed and laughed. Their grandmother cried, 'You bad boys. You are always up to something!' She was angry."[81]

Thus, while the bowl design of Plate 21 may merely depict another typical Mimbreño hunter with a captured deer, an ordinary scene from the life of the Mimbres Valley, it can also illustrate this Ahaiyute trick with the stuffed deer. Or, this particular bowl scene can equally depict the prowess of the Ahaiyute at hunting (note that the diamonds and the rain symbols have been transferred here to the back of the human figure) and the very elaborate Ahaiyute ritual for the treatment of a large game animal. The Little Twins were always extremely successful at hunting, and a very specific formula had to be followed when a large animal was captured: "The grandmother got the prayer meal to bring in the deer. . . . She spread the embroidered blanket and the Ahaiyute laid the deer with its head to the east and put beads on it and the black blanket over it. The grandmother prayed, 'Now we are glad you have reached here. Be many, and come many times again.' "[82] The assumption in such a ritual was that the animals wanted to be caught and brought into man's house, that they were thus not ashamed of their brother, man. When the deer was cooked and eaten, the skull was returned to the mountain from which the animal came, in the hope that more animals would want to return to man in the next hunt. Since such a ritual apparently became the standard procedure for the actual as well as the mythic Pueblo hunters,[83] the Holy Twins were credited with being instrumental in providing many important rites that the Pueblo people needed to succeed in the arduous life of the Southwest.

Thus, the dual deity of the Little War Twins became one of the most important in Pueblo mythology. And since the Twins could be seen as

either mischievous or heroic, as either children or adults, Tricksters or the tricked, their body of myths could appeal to a variety of tastes. Their stories must perforce end happily as well, because they are immortals, and it is little wonder that so many of the Mimbres myth bowls use them as central figures for story designs.

Spider Woman

As the Little War Twins were the archetypal hero, or heroes, of the culture, Spider Woman, or Spider Grandmother, was the archetypal Earth Mother. She was often equated with the mother of all, Thinking Woman, who thought mankind into existence, and in the version of the Creation story alluded to above, she made men and women at the same time that the Hurung Whuti were creating human beings. The ability to create was a rather easy and logical attribute for the mythical Spider Woman since the spider is one of the few living creatures that does seem to create out of itself, from itself, requiring no outside help.

Spider Woman was one of the few immortals whose attitude toward mankind was always constant, an unalterable posture of benevolence.[84] She was able to fit at will behind an ear or in a cuff, able to whisper her wise advice to aid worthy men and women at gambling or at love, and she was the steadying influence on the heroes and heroines of many myths. A Navajo legend records how Spider Woman taught Pueblo women how to weave on a loom made of the sun's rays and white shell: "There were four spindles: one a stick of zigzag lightning with a whorl of cannel coal; one a stick of flash lightning with a whorl of turquoise; a third had a stick of sheet lightning with a whorl of abalone; a rain streamer formed the stick of the fourth, and its whorl was white shell."[85]

Her role in tales connected with the Little War Twins was slightly more frustrated, however, and her wisdom in most cases was wasted on her little immortal grandsons. Plate 22 shows Spider Woman with her carrying basket and the two Little Twins on top, each with a sunflower, emblem of the Sun, their father. The symbols on the carrying basket deal with rain, as befitting the Earth Mother who taught weaving with the lightning sticks. These rain symbols are also an important part of a myth wherein the Little Twins stole rain-making ceremonial objects and caused a flood.[86] In this particular myth bowl, the storyteller-potter has depicted the well-behaved Little War Twins before the flood, or perhaps after, since in the majority of versions, the outcome of the flood was hardly serious.

In this myth, the Little War Twins insisted on playing a rain-making game despite warnings of their grandmother:

Plate 22

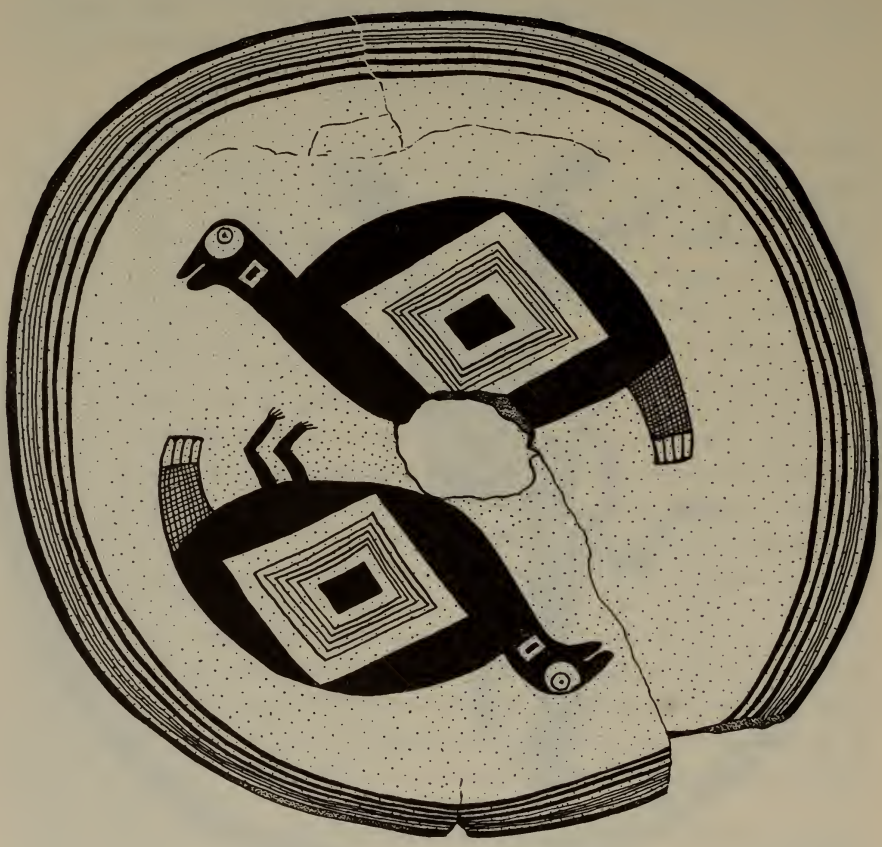

PLATE 23

They shot the lightning frame, and rolled the thunder stone and shot the arrows. The lightning came and the big clouds rolled up. It began to rain. It rained harder and harder. At last the water poured in through the hatchway. Their grandmother stood up to her knees in water. She called out, "Please stop, my grandchildren."

The Twins paid no attention, however, and continued playing with the rain-making objects until the grandmother was standing in water to her waist, then to her neck:

She called once more, "Please stop, my grandchildren!" They went right on playing the rain-making game; they shot the lightning frame and rolled the thunder stone and shot the arrows. They did not hear her call any more. They looked in and only her little knob of hair was bobbing up and down on the water.[87]

The versions vary at this point, and in some cases, Badger, with his famed digging abilities, came and dug a hole in the wall of the house to let the water recede. In some versions, the flood extended to the people, and many of them were drowned, as well as the grandmother. In still others, the Ahaiyute themselves broke a hole in the wall and the water went down enough for them to eat their midday meal. In this version their grandmother warned them that if they were not careful, they would not have a grandmother any more.[88]

The Flood

The story of a flood, or The Flood, is one of the world's universal tales and occurs in some form in almost every culture. The Pueblo body of mythology has numerous versions of flood stories, and the one dealing with the mischievous Ahaiyute and Spider Woman constitutes only one such variation. In a few of the flood tales, the flood itself took place very close to the Emergence, and some of the myths of Emergence and The Flood slide into each other by having the flood take place in the Underworld, a flooding loosed by some form of Baholikonga, the Horned Water Serpent.[89] In almost every version, however, the cause of the flood was the same as that found in the Old Testament version of the same myth—a transgression.

In one such tale, the Zuñi version recorded by Cushing, the sin that caused the flood was merely the fact that the people had not found the exact Middle. They had assumed that they had settled in the Center after the aid of the Water Spider; but it seemed that when the Water Spider was measuring for the exact center of the earth, he had swerved slightly when he lowered himself into the Middle and the people had reared their city "a little south of the very midmost place." Here, "because they had erred even so little, and because the first priest of

after times did evil, lo! the river to the southward ran full, and breaking from its pathway cut in twain the great town, burying houses and men in the mud of its impetuosity."[90] In this version, in case the error in measuring did not seem quite strong enough for total destruction, there was the added cause of the unnamed evil-doing of the first priest.

While the evil action is left undefined in the Zuñi myth, we may assume that it had something to do with sexual transgression since in most myths the Flood is a result of man's sexual weakness.[91] In one such tale of the Flood, the sin is an incestuous one: the young members of the same clan, the Corn Clan, found each other attractive and began to desire each other sexually. The earthquake occurred, precipitated the Flood, and the people fled to the high ground of Corn Mountain. As they ran, one little boy and his sister were forced to leave their grandmother, who was unable to move fast enough.

They said to their grandmother, "Stay here, grandmother, and we will go on to Corn Mountain; it is too dangerous to wait for you." The grandmother said, "It is well. I have only a little while to live. Let the young ones go on quickly; I must die one of these days." They went on to Corn Mountain without her.[92]

The waters were held back until the children reached the mountain safely, and then loosed to flood the entire valley.

It was thus not an evil to let the old perish, for they must die eventually and the young should be saved if possible, and the sin was instead a sexual one. As one of the surviving priests explained, "This flood has come upon us, because of the shameful practices of the corn clan. You were always taking your pleasure in the kivas.... You who are of one clan should be as brothers and sisters, and never desire one another."[93] This myth, of course, explains the Pueblo practice of marrying outside of the clan, the necessity of avoiding incest in the group.

Occasionally, the evil actions of a single sinner were enough to cause the Flood, as in this Tusayan version recorded by Mindeleff:

There was a very bad old man there, who, when he met any one, would spit in his face, blow his nose upon him, and rub ordure upon him. He ravished the girls and did all manner of evil. Baholikonga (The Horned Water Snake) got angry at this and turned the world upside down, and water spouted up through the kivas and through the fireplaces in the houses. The earth was rent in great chasms, and water covered everything except one narrow ridge of mud; and across this the serpent deity told all the people to travel. As they journeyed across, the feet of the bad slipped and they fell into the dark water, but the good, after many days, reached dry land. While the water was rising around

Plate 24

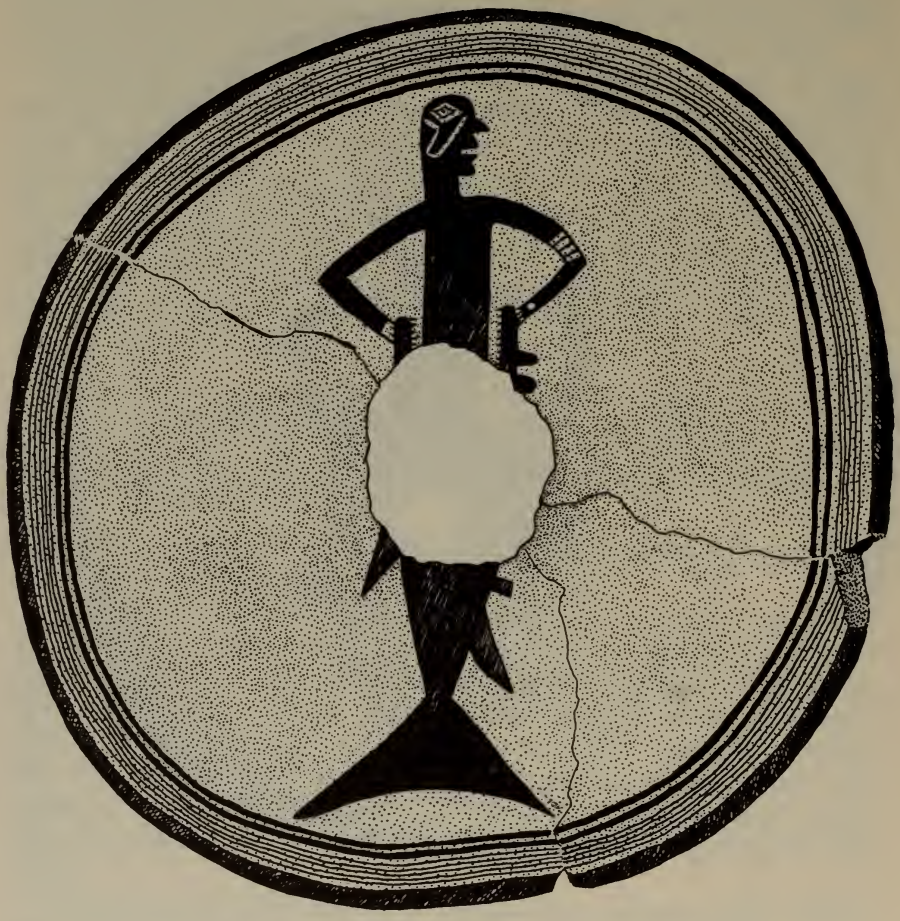

PLATE 25

the village the old people got on the tops of the houses, for they thought they could not struggle across with the younger people; but Baholikonga clothed them with the skins of turkeys, and they spread their wings out and floated in the air just above the surface of the water, and in this way they got across.... The turkey tail dragged in the water—hence the white on the turkey tail now. Wearing these turkey-skins is the reason why old people have dewlaps under the chin like a turkey; it is also the reason why old people use turkey-feathers at the religious ceremonies.[94]

As in the ontological Wandering myths that explained the transformation of many of the Lost Others into aquatic forms and thus perhaps explained the myriad of fish in Mimbres bowl designs, this particular myth may explain the presence of so many turkeys in the realistic Mimbres bowls. Plate 23 illustrates a pair of these omnipresent birds with a design of diamonds as the focus of the illustration.

The diamond has had a long history as a connotative Indian symbol, and in present-day Pueblo Indian symbolism, it is still used to depict unusual force.[95] When a Southwestern Pueblo artist drew an animal, the primary feature of the drawing was the predominant attribute or power of that animal,[96] and thus, an antelope with great endurance, a hunter with great heart or strength, a rabbit with great soul, would all need some graphic representation of their invisible power. In each of these above cases, in Mimbres pottery, the diamond has been incorporated as part of the essential design. The presence of the diamond in the bowl of Plate 23 may well represent the great power, or at least the great wisdom and heart that the aged might have had after being transformed, even for a little while, into wise, white-tip feathered turkeys.

Plates 24 and 25 have also been interpreted as being the possible depiction of a flood—the huge fish representing the water spirit, and hence a great deal of water, swallowing a man. Flooding was not an unusual occurrence in the lands of flood-water farmers, particularly in the Mimbres Valley, by the very nature of the Mimbres River itself, with its lack of an outlet to the sea and its underground flow. With an abundance of rain higher in the mountains, a flash flood rising suddenly from underground would be a real possibility in the Mimbres Valley, and it is interesting to note that in almost all versions of the mythic Flood story, the water comes from below, spouting up from the ground through the kivas, fireplaces, and *sipapu*, rather than occurring because of rain.

But while this very popular design—the popularity of the story must be evidenced by its appearance on at least two bowls—may have this

explanation, I think that it is instead another example of a myth of the Little War Twins. Rather than a generalized Flood myth, I think we have here once more a climactic scene dealing with those two Pueblo favorites, the Ahaiyute. The elaborate feather on one figure (such an elaborate feather is depicted on the bowl scene of the Ahaiyute copulating with the evil Vagina-with-Teeth) and the face painting on both designs indicate the Holy Twins rather than just an ordinary man caught in the flood. The complacency on the two faces is further evidence that the man being swallowed by the huge fish is no ordinary mortal drowning in an over-enthusiastic flood tide—the Mimbreño potters were quite capable of depicting pain or fear in their designs—and I think the bowl illustrates a myth in which one of the Little War Twins is devoured by a monstrous fish.

The following version is from the Navajo Male Shooting Way myth, a version in which the twin sons of the Sun are called Holy Boy and Holy Man.[97] In this myth, the two went on a hunting expedition but missed their rendezvous. As Holy Boy wandered around waiting for this brother, he came to a magic pool. In the center of the obviously supernatural pool that was constantly expanding and receding, he saw a cornstalk to which were attached two eagle feathers, signs of a religious offering. Holy Boy reached for the feathers, fell into the pool, and was immediately swallowed by a giant fish that took him down into the center of the water and through four different habitations of water people. Holy Boy used his flint knife to cut his way out of the fish and then healed the cut. The supernatural water people objected to the presence of an earth person, but when they were told by Big Fly who he was, they gave him sandpaintings and other forms of ritual knowledge to take back to earth.

In one version, Holy Boy broke off an ear of the cornstalk offering before he was swallowed by the huge fish—thus making the transgression even more obvious. In another version, he was rescued by Holy Man rather than being extricated from the magic pool by his own efforts. But in all versions, the swallowing by the fish became the most dramatic scene in a story of sin and expiation, an expiation which in turn resulted in new rituals and new knowledge that were beneficial to mankind.

The use of this scene on the myth bowls thus illustrates that sense of drama we have seen repeatedly on the Mimbres bowls, a scene that shows a climax and a moment of insight, an epiphany that illuminates the hand of the Mimbres storyteller-potter at its surest and its best. And this particular design is once again the depiction of a myth with a hap-

py ending rather than an ominous reminder of a punishing flood, the kind of mythic happy ending that was constantly selected for the Mimbres myth bowls.

Baholikonga, the Horned Water Serpent

The Horned Water Serpent was a gigantic creature with a single horn on his forehead, who lived either in the interior of the earth whence the people came, or in certain holy lakes in this fourth world. He was a minor god among all the Pueblo tribes,[98] but the ancient cult of the Plumed (Horned in a myriad of stone depictions) Serpent was one of the most important in Central America. At the end of the tenth century, about the time of the appearance of the Mimbres potters, the cult of the Plumed Serpent, Quetzalcoatl, got new impetus in the Toltec-Chichimec city of Tula.[99] In this southern area, the religion of Quetzalcoatl demanded gifts of animals and flowers rather than human sacrifice, and perhaps it is not mere coincidence that in the Pueblo area, the mythic Water Serpent was the one who nourished germs and seeds and who furnished liquid in the form of sap to plants and blood to animals.[100]

Baholikonga had dominion over all the waters of the earth and was particularly the guardian of sacred springs. The following very unadorned myth concerns this guardianship role. In the Zuñi version, a maiden was washing at the sacred spring and found a little image which turned into a human baby when she picked it up. After she took the baby home, it turned into the Horned Water Snake and became her lover. In some variations, the Water Serpent merely wrapped the girl in its coils and carried her away, but in others, the couple went back to the sacred shrine together to live with the immortals.[101] The Hopi version of the same myth, apparently used to illustrate the rationale for Hopi girls never immersing themselves completely in water while bathing, tells how a maiden went into the sacred spring, immersed herself completely while she washed her clothes, and thereupon became pregnant. She died a little later and was buried, but after four days, when the people checked her grave, they found that the Horned Water Serpent had taken her.[102]

The design on the bowl in Plate 26 depicts Baholikonga, who here has the added symbolism of the four corners and possibly the center of the world in his own central square. The Horned Water Serpent was often shown as a double-headed figure,[103] and as one myth describes him, he "lived at a place called Blue Lake and faced in all directions, so that is was impossible to approach him without being seen."[104] Again,

probably not coincidentally, both the southern and northern Chichimec areas depicted the Plumed Serpent as a double animal with a dual personality, a prime example of the duality of life.[105]

The myth bowl design of Plate 27 presents another image of the Horned Water Serpent, with the elaborate stylization of water symbolism along his length. His horn is decorated with a turkey feather, a definite correspondence to the more southern Plumed Serpent, and a reminder of the Flood wherein he used turkey skins to save the aged. He here also has the four feet of one who was formerly human or who can take a human form at will to become a lover of Pueblo girls.

Parrot Girl

This myth, depicted in the bowl of Plate 1, is an eleventh century Horatio Alger success story. Nesbitt, when he first saw this particular bowl, felt that it had something to do with romance,[106] and the myth itself bears out such an intuitive feeling.

It is the story of a poor boy, who in some versions was fat and ugly as well. Poverty was generally associated with shame and was an occasion for ridicule in the Pueblo cultures,[107] and the fact that the boy had no parents, only a grandmother, and had big eyes and frizzy hair made him beneath contempt. The poor fat young man wanted to marry the beautiful daughter of the village priest, but since every other young man in the village also wanted to marry the beautiful girl, the poor boy's grandmother knew he had no chance. But the girl had refused all the suitors, even the handsomest, and when the poor boy asked why, she confessed that each had offered something she did not need. All she wanted were parrot feathers for her father, since he was a priest and there could be no dances without parrot feathers. The poor fat boy assured her that he would get the parrot feathers, and he set off toward the south, where the parrots were.

Another Mimbres bowl in a private collection depicts a girl in the center of the design with three young men around her. One holds a rabbit, one a fish, and the third a parrot. The scene is obviously from this same myth, illustrating the suitors and their offerings.

The myth, here in the Zuñi version, continues with the young man aided by Hawk, or Chicken Hawk, who first magically changed the young man into a beautiful person by getting him a new skin. Hawk then helped the young man find the Parrot people, who gave him many parrot feathers to take home. Blue Parrot Girl also fell in love with the now handsome young man and wanted to go with him back to the north. She followed him home:

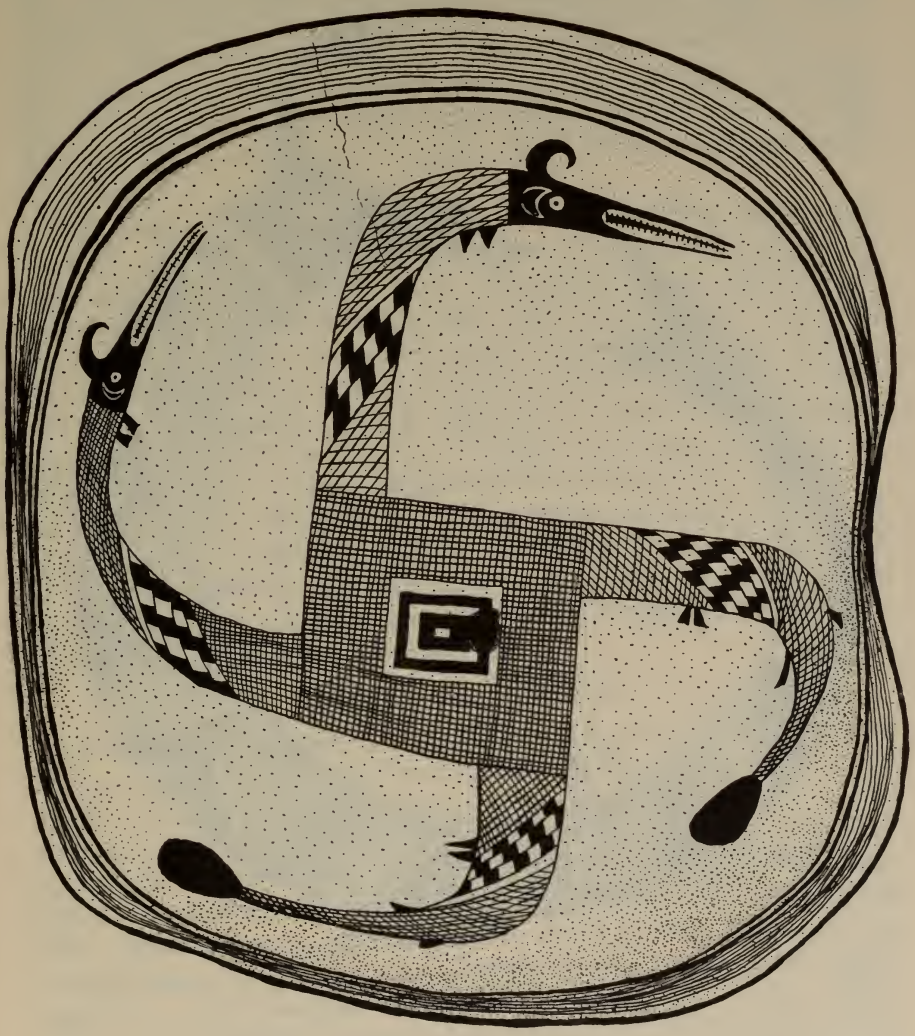

PLATE 26

PLATE 27

They came to his grandmother's and Parrot Girl stayed with her, but the boy went on to the house of the village priest. He had lots of parrot feathers. He got there in the early evening. The girl set out food for him. After he had eaten, the girl asked, "Did you get feathers?" "Yes." "I shall marry you." They were married. In eight days the village priest called a Muwaiya dance, and they had many parrot feathers.[108]

The scene on the bowl of Plate 1 illustrates this successful adventure and the union of the poor boy made good with the priest's lovely daughter. Here, Parrot Girl, in her parrot form, accompanies the young man.

The myth concludes with Parrot Girl becoming human (or "cooked", in the Zuñi phrase, as opposed to the "raw" state of the supernaturals), and in some versions, the young man married her, as well as the priest's beautiful daughter, and lived happily with his two wives. The monogamy of the present day Pueblo groups makes this version incompatible with modern practice, but the presence of men with two wives in numerous myths indicates that the ancient practice, perhaps even as late as the tenth century, may have included the custom of polygamy. At any rate, the myth of Parrot Girl ends happily for all concerned, with either one or two wives, and in all versions, the outcome of the venture to get the parrot feathers is successful. It is one of the most blatantly romantic tales in the Pueblo mythology, and again, its appearance in at least two bowls indicates that it was a popular myth in the Mimbres Valley.

The Corn Maidens

I believe that the Mimbres bowl illustrated in Plate 28 is depicting the Corn Maidens, of whom in mythology there were seven. Since the number seven is an awkward one for a bowl design,[109] however, the more common practice is followed in this bowl of presenting two figures for the group, who in turn may represent the duality of a single figure if we see corn as coming from one Corn Mother with seven variations. Although the two female figures might be seen as merely two young Mimbreño maidens, the multiple symbols in the bowl design suggest an interpretation beyond the ordinary life in the valley. Women in the Mimbres Culture may or may not have been part of the hunting scene, but it may be significant that in this particular bowl the actual hunting implements are absent and we have instead two large game animals (possibly deer or prong-horned antelope) standing on blankets. The hunt, as such, is missing in the design, as it is in the Corn Maidens myths, where the Corn Sisters are nonetheless closely associated with deer. Besides these particular animals, the butterfly

and rain symbols and the symbolic corn plants at the edges of the blankets all lead us toward the mythic.

And as further evidence that these two maidens are indeed the Corn Sisters, we need merely consider a description of the Corn Maidens to see that the figures in the bowl contain all of the traditional symbolism generally linked to these female deities. Since the costumes and rituals were so static in the Pueblo culture, a description of the Corn Maidens that might be applicable to the Mimbreño version of the Corn Sisters can be found in Fewkes' more modern description of Corn Maid (Shalako Mana). In his analysis of ancient Hopi designs and symbols, Fewkes says that Corn Maid always wore a blanket and a kilt with a butterfly motif and a symbol of falling rain. On the Mimbres myth bowl, a butterfly motif is used on the apparel of the females, and the Pueblo conventionalized butterfly symbol is featured on the blanket at the right. The rain symbolism is incorporated into the fringe of the sash and very obviously into the water spiral and the zig-zag lightning symbols on the center blanket. The face of Corn Maid as Fewkes described her was always painted, and here we have the painted mask-like design on the two faces. Corn Maid always wore "a wooden ear pendant, a square, flat body covered on one side with a mosaic of turquoise."[110] In the Mimbres illustration, the head decorations on the maids have been seen as hair whorls similar to the more modern Hopi hair whorls that unmarried girls were still wearing at the turn of the century. Perhaps they are, but if such hair dressing were intended, I suspect the rather exact Mimbres potter-artists would have put these whorls at the top of the head rather than at the base of the jaw the way they are in the bowl design, and I think we are safe in assuming that these decorations are the square ear pendants of the Corn Maidens. Both figures also wear the strings of turquoise and shell necklaces that Fewkes describes on Corn Maid. Finally, the conventionalized cornstalks (which are depicted the same way in at least two other bowls that show men in the fields) tie the two figures very definitely to the Corn Maidens.

In the various versions of the Corn Maiden myths, the seven sacred sisters originally lived among the people, who provided them with shelter and cherished them. But one day, one of the bow priests who guarded the maidens was attracted to them because of their great beauty, and he accosted Yellow Corn. In the Zuñi version,

> Yellow Corn resisted him. She said, "No, we do not know men. Our flesh is food for the people. If we are hot with desire the people's food would be spoiled." She escaped from him and went back into the kiva. She said to her sisters, "My sisters, I must tell you the trouble that has

come upon us. We are beautiful, my sisters. When I went outside the bow priest followed me and laid hands on me. He desired me. I repulsed him but he persisted. He lifted my clothes. I told him, 'I am your mother. Shall I lie with my child? Your flesh is formed of my flesh,' What shall we do, my sisters?"[111]

The sisters all agreed that they had no choice but to go away and hide from the people whose desire had made them less valuable. Thus they left, taking all the corn in the village with them.

In the Maids as man's mother story we have a close approximation to the *Popol Vul* version of man's creation from cornmeal, and in the disappearance of the Corn Maidens we have an ontological myth explaining the seasons. Such seasonal myths are found in virtually every culture, and the Pueblo explanation attributes the coming of fall and winter to this hiding of the Corn Sisters.

After the Corn Maidens disappeared, the people began to starve. They sent out searchers for the Corn Sisters, but no one had any luck until at last Ne'we'kwe Youth (or in the Hopi terminology, Paiyatuma) discovered them at the bottom of the water. Ne'we'kwe asked them four times (the mythic number at which the request must be granted) to return, and they were forced to agree. Ne'we'kwe Youth made a whistle from the bones of a rabbit to lead the seven sisters back to the people. Here the bone whistle merges with the flute of the Humpbacked Flute Player, and Ne'we'kwe, having retrieved corn and spring, becomes a Pueblo fertility figure as well.

When the Corn Maidens were thus returned, Ne'we'kwe cautioned the people:

The Corn Maidens left us because one man desired them and wished to lay hands on them. We are their flesh and they give us themselves to eat. If they give it to us again and we plant in the spring for the rain to water we shall be fed again with their flesh. They will be our mothers and we shall be their children. If at any time we think evil thoughts or are unhappy they will go away from us again and we shall have nothing.[112]

The Corn Sisters were placated, and each went to the homes of the village to leave a bit of a kernel of her particular kind of corn (i.e., the seven varieties of Southwestern corn: yellow, red, blue, black or purple, white, speckled, and sweet).

Next morning each corn room was bursting with the flesh of the corn mothers. Everyone had plenty to eat, but after this corn ears never filled out to the tip. Because the bow priest tried to lay hands on Yellow Corn, Zuñi corn is never perfectly kernelled.[113]

A variation of this myth gives the misuse of corn as the reason for the

Corn Maidens' retreat from the people. The people were careless with the ears, the kernels, and the pollen of the corn, and their wastefulness angered the corn mothers so much that they left to go hide below the waters. The search for them was made by various birds and the Ahaiyute, but all failed until again Ne'we'kwe Youth located them and persuaded them to return.[114] This was one mythic adventure the Little War Twins could not accomplish successfully because they were not fertility figures in the Pueblo pantheon and were forced to leave the return of spring to another demigod.

In both versions of the departure and return of the Corn Maidens, the people learned not to have wrong-placed desires or practice wrong-headed waste, and thus in both versions, the myth has a happy ending, with the people learning the more prudent course. In all versions, the Corn Maidens must disappear in order to leave their flesh, the kernels of their corn seeds. In all of these myth variations, the learning, the receiving of rituals, and the adoption of proper behavioral patterns are important, and what we seem to have is a Pueblo version of the "fortunate fall." This is a concept in which Adam must lose Eden in order to gain Paradise, and here, the Pueblo peoples must lose the physical presence of the corn deities in order to have an abundance of their flesh or seed. In the Pueblo transgression, little harm was done except that, because of man's own imperfections, the corn was no longer perfect.

But in another myth centered around the Corn Maidens, the outcome is a little harsher on mankind. This myth concerns a village of men who had no women and who spent all their time gambling. One day, one of the men from this womanless village went deer hunting and traveled to the Southwest:

> He had seen no deer. About sunset he got there. Now there were seven sisters that lived there; nobody knew they were living there. They were Yellow Corn, and Red Corn, and Blue Corn, and White Corn, and Black Corn, and Speckled Corn, and Sweet Corn. That night Red Corn and Blue Corn went to get water. They put water in their jars, and they saw this man. He had never seen girls before. He didn't know anything about them. He saw these girls, and he saw they were good-looking girls, and he was afraid.[115]

After the young man conquered his fear, he went to the Corn Maidens' house, and finally gained entrance. The Corn Maidens were all lovely, and the man wanted to marry them. After much discussion it was decided that Red Corn would go with him. He was delighted with his wife and did not gamble any more.

The other gamblers wondered what had happened to him and went to his house one at a time, climbed down the ladder, and discovered

Plate 28

PLATE 29

the young man with his new wife. Each of the other gamblers then wanted a wife, and on successive trips to the Southwest, the first young man brought back Blue Corn Girl, White Corn Girl, etc. to marry one of the other gamblers in the village.

All but Sweet Corn finally had husbands, and she, left alone, grew weak and thin. Ne'we'kwe Youth came across the Milky Way, made her strong again, then took his flute, drew her in, and blew her out again in the form of a yellow butterfly so that she could fly to the village of the gamblers and search for her sisters. Here we have one possiblity, other than pollination, for the close association of the Corn Maidens with the butterfly.

In the meantime, the husbands had gone off to hunt deer. Depicted in the bowl of Plate 28 is this reminder of the deer that led the young man to the house of the Corn Maidens and led the gambler husbands away from their wives again. The deer was a semi-sacred animal, for when Kachinas died they became deer.[116] The elaborate ritual for dealing with a slain deer that was noted in one of the War Twin myths illustrates the careful treatment man was to accord the deer or any large game animal, and we may speculate that large game were sanctified in the manner of the sacred animals of the Greek huntress-goddess, Artemis. While we are not able to make an exact correspondence to the Greek myth, the virginal, asexual character of the Corn Maidens, who must not know men sexually, makes possible a close analogue to the virgin huntress Artemis and suggests that the deer is an important motif in the Corn Maiden myth.

The deer was the catalyst for the original contact of the seven immortal sisters with men and was also the occasion for the breaking of that contact, for while the husbands were hunting, their Corn Maiden wives agreed that they had been very foolish themselves, presumably because they had become physically involved with men. Traditionally, the Corn Maidens were offended by sexual desire, and even though in this particular myth the men were unaware of their offense, ignorance seemed to be no excuse. The Corn Maidens thus disappeared into the ground before Sweet Corn arrived to take them home.

When Sweet Corn did arrive at the village, the gamblers were gambling once more, and they wagered with her. Sweet Corn of course won each game until at last the gamblers wagered their lives. They lost once more, and the six other Corn Sisters reappeared to go with Sweet Corn, who tossed down a handful of magic arrowheads that caved in the roof and killed all the gamblers. The myth ends simply, "The seven sisters went home."[117]

This particular myth has no moral, no ontological explanation attached. The only reason for the deaths of the husbands seems to have been the almost incestuous guilt of the men who desired the virginal Corn Maidens. It is possible that hunting the sacred deer of the Corn Maidens may have been the central human transgression of the myth, or there may be in the story a no-work motif in which excessive gambling might be offensive to an industrious Pueblo society. Many Mimbres bowls depict gambling scenes, very often with the loser in an abject pose, and if there is a condemnation of gaming implied in the Corn Maiden myth, the Mimbres bowl of Plate 29 may thus also represent the same tale. The bowl design might be an illustration of the gambling husbands at the opening or closing of the tale, spending all of their time playing rather than working, and the scene could thus be a warning to those who waste—either time or corn.

The Priest's Son Who Lost Everything Gambling

But while the gamblers on the bowl of Plate 29 might be seen as the gamblers in the myth of the Corn Maidens, the same design (and the myriad of other gambling scenes) could also be an illustration from the story of the young gambler who lost all his family's wealth in gaming and who then left the village, shamed. This long, involved myth begins with the gambling that led to the departure from the village, and the scene on the myth bowl of Plate 29 may well be the incentive moment, the basic conflict of a story in which a young man gambles until he learns better.

When the young man left the village, his wandering led him to Spider Woman, who fed him and gave him her benevolent aid. She sent him to a magic house occupied by a family of witches who challenged him to perform many magic feats. The witch daughter, who had fallen in love with the young man, helped him win all of the challenges and finally her own hand in marriage. Since a year had already passed from the time the boy had left his own village, the young couple decided to return to his home. Again they encountered Spider Woman, who fed them from her inexhaustible basket of corn balls.

As the couple went toward the village, however, an old witch lured the girl into a tree and turned her into a dove. The witch turned herself into the young girl, and the young man did not notice the difference. The poor dove followed along, trying to attract the young man's attention, but he blithely took the witch to his parents' house. Everyone was delighted to see him with a beautiful bride and the embarrassment of

the gambling losses was forgotten. In the meantime, the dove managed to find a priest and a medicine man who could transform her back into a girl and change the false girl back into the old witch. The old witch woman was then thrown out of the village, and "there was the beautiful wife again, and they were married happily."[118]

Conclusions

Edgar L. Hewett regretted in the 1940s that the Pueblo peoples had not attained the use of letters, for if they had, he assured himself, "they would have created a great literature."[119] The presence of the Mimbres myth bowls shows that the Pueblo complex of the Southwest did have such a literature—in a continuum that extended from sometime prior to 1000 A.D. to the present.

Naturally, the myths herein related on the Mimbres pottery are only a very partial listing, and the use of the myth bowls has this obvious limitation. Too many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Mimbres bowls have been destroyed[120] or filed away in private or otherwise inaccessible collections, for the mythology to be anywhere near complete. And with so relatively few myth bowls left, it is not absolutely warranted to make sweeping generalizations about the myths. We are thus not able to judge with any degree of certainty the number of times any one myth was used as a bowl design, and thus we are not able to judge the popularity of any single myth. But on the hundreds of bowls I was able to examine, there seems to have been a very limited selection of myths used as designs.[121] The same characters keep reappearing, and the same scenes keep being featured.

Such romantic tales as "Parrot Girl" or "The Priest's Son Who Lost Everything at Gambling," in which the young lovers get married and live happily ever after, seem typical of those depicted on the myth bowls. The Mimbres potter-storytellers apparently liked what might be called the more optimistic stories rather than the vast number of pessimistic ones that they might have selected, and the basic structure of the tale on almost every one of these myth bowls demonstrates a move from a negative or unhappy state toward a positive, more satisfying state. In every one of the myth bowls I found, the story centered in the design had a happy, or at least an acceptable, outcome. The idea of the "fortunate fall" is implicit in more than one of the myths, and while the people in the tales often lose from their transgression, they gain either material rewards or important rituals that will help them control their environment and will benefit their future generations. Thus in every case, more good than loss results. And even the tragedy of the

children's transformation into fish in the Wandering myth became a satisfactory transfer of the children into the land of the immortals, rather than a cause for sorrow at their loss. In a positive, and almost optimistic, conclusion to the myth, the children "had returned unharmed" to the world of the undying ancients.

The fact that few terrible or even gloomy subjects have so far been found depicted on the myth bowls should thus indicate that the basic Mimbreño *weltanschauung* was positive and hopeful. One observer has referred to the Mimbres potter-storytellers themselves as the "laughing artists of the Mimbres Valley,"[122] and the fact that even such an awesome figure as Skeleton Man, the Pueblo god of death, is depicted on the pottery as a jolly, grinning fertility figure, should indicate that the eleventh century Mimbreños were essentially a satisfied, contented people. The cartoon-like designs have a happy complacency that would seem to echo a similar complacency in life style.

In the myths chosen by the potter-storytellers, transgression is ever punishable, the right way must be followed, and the evil path must be avoided. In the myths painted on the interior of the hemispherical food bowls, justice and goodness always prevail. The general outlook that is thus reflected in the myth bowls would indicate that the Mimbreños believed in a benevolent universe and that their individual lives, insofar as they could be equated with the lives of their mythic heroes, were seen as a part of a logical and reasonable system that offered the earned fruits of a natural order.

But the Mimbres Valley was abandoned by the Mimbreños and we have yet to trace with much security the Mimbres pottery as it was absorbed into other, later, Pueblo cultures. To the casual observer, the Mimbres painted ware and their story bowls appear to have disappeared abruptly in the thirteenth century. Later however, Ruth Bunzel, in her study of Pueblo potters in the twentieth century, noted an interesting correlation to the idea of storytelling incorporated into Pueblo pottery. Her 1920s Zuñi informants assured her that every design on their pottery had a name and a "story," a reference to a situation or an event, rather than to an object or an idea.[123] We have a rather obvious direct line here from the Mimbres food bowls and their myths some seven centuries earlier.

This study can only suggest, can only speculate from the handful of myth bowls that have survived the avarice of twentieth century pot hunters and collectors,[125] but perhaps as more Mimbres pottery is brought to light, from further excavations or from safety deposit boxes or museum storage rooms, further myths can be added to give a more

complete picture of the Mimbres and ancient Pueblo mythology. And then perhaps we shall have a body of literature from the New World that can at least compete with that of the Old, a literature, not written in the form of an *Iliad* or an *Odyssey*, but painted in climactic scenes on slipped and painted clay.

SOURCES FOR PLATES

Plate 1. Paul H. Nesbitt, *The Ancient Mimbreños.*
Plate 2. J. J. Brody, *Mimbres Painted Pottery.*
Plate 3. Crow-wing, *A Pueblo Indian Journal.*
Plate 4. Jesse Walter Fewkes, *Designs on Prehistoric Pottery from the Mimbres Valley, New Mexico.*
Plate 5. J. J. Brody.
Plate 6. Possession of the Western New Mexico University Museum.
Plate 7. J. J. Brody.
Plate 8. Ibid.
Plate 9. Jesse Walter Fewkes, *Archeology of the Lower Mimbres Valley.*
Plate 10. J. J. Brody.
Plate 11. Ibid.
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Plate 14. Wesley Bradfield, *Cameron Creek Village.*
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Plate 16. J. J. Brody.
Plate 17. Possession of the Western New Mexico University Museum.
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Plate 20. A. V. Kidder, *An Introduction to the Study of Southwestern Archeology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924).
Plate 21. Wesley Bradfield.
Plate 22. Jesse W. Fewkes, *Designs on Prehistoric Pottery from the Mimbres Valley, New Mexico.*
Plate 23. Possession of D.R. Carr.
Plate 24. Possession of the University of Minnesota Museum.
Plate 25. O.T. Snodgrass.
Plate 26. Possession of the Southwest Museum, Highland Park, from a photograph in *The Masterkey,* 50 (July-September, 1976).
Plate 27. Editha Watson, "The Laughing Artists of the Mimbres Valley," *Art and Archeology* (July 1932).
Plate 28. Nesbitt.
Plate 29. H. S. and C. B. Cosgrove, *The Swarts Ruin.*

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